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Chairman: Ms. Barrington ..... (Ireland)

Contents

Agenda item 92: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*)

(d) Science and technology for development

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00-67818 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 92: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*)

(d) Science and technology for development (A/55/96-E/2000/84, A/55/413)

1. **Mr. Agona** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said the Committee had before it two reports arising out of General Assembly resolution 54/201 (A/55/413 and A/55/96-E/2000/84). The substantive report (A/55/96-E/2000/84) contained proposals for strengthening the coordination of the mechanisms on the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. It also highlighted steps taken by UNCTAD to create an electronic network and information exchange system as a means of strengthening cooperation and synergy relating to science and technology for development and improving information sharing and the generation of ideas within the United Nations system and among all major players, including the private sector.

2. The reports were directly relevant to the recent ministerial declaration of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council concerning the role of information and communication technologies and the proposal to create a task force on that topic. The Secretary-General of UNCTAD had shared his vision of UNCTAD's role with regard to science and technology during UNCTAD X, stressing the critical importance of science and technology for development. Three important areas in which UNCTAD already provided support and which needed to be strengthened were: intellectual property rights and their effect on the transfer of technology, environmentally sound technologies and their interface with trade and development, and information and communication technologies and their applications in the area of trade. With regard to the latter, concrete measures such as the Advance Cargo Information System (ACIS) and the Automated System of Customs Data Entry, Control and Management (ASYCUDA) had already been adopted and needed to be further developed.

3. The report contained concrete proposals (paragraphs 13-16) which he hoped the Committee would support. A more detailed report on progress made in implementation of resolution 54/201 would be prepared following the fifth session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development scheduled for the spring of 2001.

4. **Mr. Le Gargasson** (France), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries, Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey and, in addition, Norway, noted with interest the proposals to strengthen the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD).

5. The European Union was fully aware of the need to improve the scientific and industrial capacity of developing countries. It was vital to increase technology transfer but at the same time respect intellectual and industrial property rights. The latter was a prerequisite for European Union support for commercial practices which promoted the rapid dissemination of technology in particular to the developing countries, whose Governments must create legislative and regulatory frameworks capable of attracting private investment and protecting intellectual property.

6. The impact of technological innovation on the economy, society and natural environment of countries must also be considered. The emergence of the information society had made science and technology capacity-building in developing countries more important than ever. The industrialized countries must provide support for maintaining and developing scientific communities in the developing countries, as well as assistance in building expert and university networks among those countries. The European Union attached the utmost importance to that.

7. It was essential that developing countries should have access to new information technologies in order to derive maximum benefit from globalization. The emergence of the information society would have a significant impact on inter alia trade and development, access to financial markets and education and could help developing countries move forward.

8. All must work together to close the digital gap and ensure better knowledge-sharing. He therefore welcomed the discussion of that subject during the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in July 2000, and the decision to create a task force to assist developing countries in reaping the maximum benefits from the digital revolution. The European Union would work

with other development partners to take into account the special needs of the developing countries and particularly the least developed countries, for whom the cost of access to information technologies was often prohibitive.

9. Improving the food and sanitation situation in developing countries, particularly among the most vulnerable groups, must be given high priority. He therefore stressed the need to focus scientific and technological progress on sustainable improvement of the food and health situation of peoples as well as on environmentally sound natural resource management. Biotechnologies could play an important role in improving the health of populations and combating poverty and malnutrition in the developing countries. Greater international cooperation in managing the advantages and risks of such technologies was needed so that their potential economic, social and environmental benefits could be realized and public confidence retained and enhanced thanks to the adoption of transparent policies. The European Union was ready to work with developing countries to strengthen their capacities and encourage research and development as well as information-sharing in biotechnologies which were adapted to their special needs.

10. Finally, he said that women must have the same access as men to science and technology in order to play their full role in development. He hoped that the general emphasis on the education of girls would ultimately result in growing numbers of women being represented at all levels of scientific and technological research.

11. **Mr. Anaedu** (Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that rapid scientific and technological progress, especially in biotechnology, microelectronics and information and communication technology, had played a critical role in the economic and social development of the modern world and offered many opportunities. Access to those technologies and their benefits had a lasting impact on the way nations and peoples competed for control of the earth's resources and were critical for the effective integration of developing countries into the global economy. It was a source of concern, however, that, for the most part, the developing countries were lagging behind and, with their modest investment in research, finding it difficult to keep pace with new developments. As a result, the widening gap between the developed and developing countries had emerged as a major problem facing the international community and one of the principal causes of the growing income gap and the imbalance in the flow of financial resources and investment.

12. He expressed concern that the United Nations had been progressively marginalized since the adoption, in 1979, of the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology and appeared ill equipped to face the current challenges in science and technology. Its role must be urgently strengthened to enable it to be more effective in the promotion of international cooperation in science and technology; indeed that should be a priority. He therefore welcomed the outcome of the high-level segment of the recent substantive session of the Economic and Social Council and hoped that United Nations activities in that area would be consolidated as a result.

13. There was also an urgent need for concerted international action in the areas of research and development, capacity-building, transfer of environmentally sound technologies on concessional and preferential terms, as well as access to financial resources to assist the developing countries. Barriers which had prevented the developing countries from exploiting science and technology, including in areas of traditional knowledge, must also be eliminated. Lack of infrastructure, the prohibitive cost of acquiring knowledge and the small economies of developing countries remained impediments and greater international support for regional and subregional science and technology initiatives by the developing countries was necessary, including cooperation amongst the developing countries themselves, with a view to promoting investment and trade. He noted that the provisions of the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) relating to transfer of technology had not been fully implemented to the mutual benefit of both producers and users of technical knowledge and stressed that the international community should acknowledge the patent rights of developing countries, whenever traditional, especially indigenous, knowledge was applied in industry in the developed countries.

14. He recognized that advances in science and technology could pose risks for the environment and would greatly affect the development of the earth's resources as well as implementation of Agenda 21. The challenge was to develop a strategy for the appropriate

use of science and technology for sustainable development, in particular in developing countries. As a means of generating wealth, science and technology could also play a crucial role in addressing the problems such as the external debt burden, recurrent natural disasters, conflicts and health challenges including HIV/AIDS in the developing countries and thereby close not only the economic gap between the rich and poor nations but also the current digital gap. In that context, he stressed that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development had a crucial role to play in providing the framework for science and technology policies and in developing guidelines within the United Nations system, and should be better equipped to play that role. In addition, new, innovative measures must be adopted to help the developing countries benefit from and meet the challenges of scientific and technological progress.

15. **Mr. Valdivieso** (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said that the technological changes driving globalization were transforming the social and economic lives of countries, through the so-called "digital revolution", which stimulated growth and placed a premium on the intellectual capital. Effective integration of the developing countries into the global economy required guaranteed access to markets, secure development financing and science and technology transfer from the developed to the developing countries. The international community must ensure that middle-income developing countries were integrated into the constantly changing global economy in order to reduce the risk of their becoming marginalized.

16. He was concerned that extraordinarily rapid changes, such as the growth of the Internet, could be perceived by some sectors of society as a threat rather than an opportunity since the information explosion could contribute to widening the gap between rich and poor. That must be avoided, and, in that context, he stressed the importance of information and communication technologies by the Economic and Social Council and the consensus achieved on the need to ensure the active participation of developing countries in the digital revolution and make the new technologies the principal tool for the promotion of literacy, the expansion of knowledge and the eradication of poverty throughout the world.

17. The success of the information technology revolution would be measured by its effectiveness in contributing to the ultimate goal of the eradication of poverty. The United Nations was the ideal forum for the exchange of ideas and experiences in that area and the dialogue begun in the Economic and Social Council should be only the first of many opportunities to strengthen the consensus on the role of information technologies and international cooperation. The private telecommunications and information sector also had an essential role to play and he supported the creation of technology centres at the community or local levels which could become focal points for the development of skills and knowledge among low-income groups. The United Nations must ensure that globalization maintained a human face and benefited all, avoiding a new kind of marginalization, the "digital gap".

18. Rapid advances in the areas of microelectronics, biotechnology and information technology were crucial for development and greater international cooperation was necessary to ensure access to the opportunities they provided. New technologies must also be used to promote traditional values, cultures and identity as well as knowledge of indigenous and traditional development practices. The Rio Group was working to strengthen regional mechanisms in the area of science and technology and, at meetings organized recently in Florianopolis and Montevideo by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) respectively, had traced the broad outlines of joint actions to ensure that they became full members of the information society by 2005. They would continue to work to ensure that science and technology received the attention they deserved on the agenda of the United Nations.

19. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that recent momentous changes in information and communication technologies offered great opportunities but had also led to ignominious disparities. For a large majority of the world's population, technological progress had brought virtually no benefits and had not reduced poverty. Action was therefore necessary on both the national and international levels to ensure that technological progress benefited each inhabitant of the planet. Practical measures must be adopted to apply knowledge and technology to meeting the basic needs of people, and the capacity of developing countries to utilize science and technology for development must be enhanced.

20. In April 2000, in Havana, leaders at the South Summit had expressed their resolve to make science and technology a national and international priority and were launching national initiatives to that end. His Government, for example, had increased its development budget for science and technology by 12,000 per cent, and was promoting science education and creating new learning opportunities for the young. Its comprehensive approach to information and communication technologies included the training of a skilled information technology workforce, creation of a legislative and regulatory framework conducive to the promotion of information technology as the engine of development, incentives for local and foreign investors, and the establishment of an efficient and cost-effective infrastructure which provided affordable and widespread connectivity, all in an effort to ensure that the digital gap would be narrowed rapidly.

21. Joint ventures were also being encouraged and a South Institute of Information Technology was being established to share Pakistan's expertise in the information technology sector. Such measures reflected the efforts a large number of developing countries were making to implement policies and apply the potential of science and technology to the promotion of development and the eradication of poverty. Such efforts, however, would not yield the desired results without similar international efforts to place science and technology at the service of development. The international community must support the efforts of developing countries, especially the most disadvantaged, by providing them with sufficient resources and technical assistance and removing all barriers to the acquisition of technology.

22. Although the private sector played an important role in the development and dissemination of technology, public policy and public action remained of fundamental importance. At the global level, the role of the United Nations in promoting the transfer of knowledge and technology to developing countries was critical. The Health InterNetwork for developing countries and the United Nations Information Technology Service (UNITeS) initiatives testified to the immense potential of the United Nations in spreading the benefits of technology. The establishment of the task force on information and communication technologies by the Economic and Social Council had also been an important step in building partnerships with the private sector, would be instrumental in reinforcing the faith of Member States, in particular the developing countries, in the utility of such partnerships, and would make new partnerships in the fields of environmentally sound technologies and biotechnology possible. Concrete measures should also be taken to revitalize the existing United Nations bodies as well as the Secretariat so that they could play their rightful role in the promotion of science and technology for development. In that context, he welcomed steps being undertaken by UNCTAD to establish electronic networks in the field of science and technology for development.

23. In order to revitalize the role of the United Nations in coordinating science and technology for development, certain measures were needed: sufficient regular budget resources should be allocated to finance related United Nations, in particular UNCTAD, activities; the General Assembly should continue its annual consideration of the item; UNCTAD, in cooperation with relevant United Nations bodies, should identify areas of potential partnerships between the United Nations and the private sector for the promotion of science and technology for development; the United Nations as a whole should launch a capacity-building campaign for the developing countries to enhance the absorptive capacity of the latter; and the TRIPs Agreement should be reviewed and measures taken to operationalize provisions which facilitated access to and dissemination and transfer of technologies. Knowledge must be shared, and not jealously protected, if the international fight against underdevelopment and poverty was to succeed.

24. **Mr. Osei-Danquah** (Ghana) agreed that the purpose of coordination of work in the context of the role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) was to create synergies and promote complementarity. Involving United Nations bodies in the Commission's panels was the most effective way of institutionalizing the linkages in science and technology for development.

25. He noted the efforts made by the UNCTAD secretariat to establish electronic networks open to members of the Commission and to others interested in science and technology for development as well as the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs (EC-ESA) initiative and efforts to transform the United Nations into a system-wide community of information technology experts and users through innovative networking arrangements. The report of the Secretary-

General (A/55/96-E/2000/84) presented a good argument for making UNCTAD the lynchpin for the technology for development network. The steps suggested for involving all relevant actors in creating a networked community seemed practical and realistic and he therefore urged support for the proposal by the firm Yet2.com to cooperate with UNCTAD and called for the allocation of additional resources so that UNCTAD and other United Nations bodies could create networking and information exchange systems and ensure the coordination thereof.

26. The Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council had recognized the important role of information technology in accelerating growth, promoting sustainable development and eradicating poverty and called for effective and meaningful efforts to enhance the impact of such technology on development. It had also called for the United Nations system to play a key role in coordinating efforts to expand the development impact of information and communication technology. The level of support given to the proposals made in the report of the Secretary-General would be an early indicator of the international community's resolve to put science and technology at the service of development.

27. **Mr. Maksimychev** (Russian Federation) said that the priority tasks of the United Nations included dealing with problems of scientific and technical cooperation in the conditions of globalization. The role of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development was growing. The effectiveness of United Nations cooperation for the development and implementation of national scientific and technological policies depended to a significant extent on the successful adaptation of States to the process of globalization. The Commission should make efforts to develop scientific-technical partnerships and communication networks, including between the State and private sector, and cooperation on access for developing countries and countries with economies in transit to the new technologies, including environmentally sound technologies.

28. The Commission should also encourage closer inter-institutional cooperation with other partners in the United Nations system, in order to fulfil more effectively its mandate of coordinator in the field of science and technology, and to ensure timely correction and updating of the relevant United Nations activities. He therefore welcomed the measures contained in General Assembly resolution 201 (1999) for strengthening the Commission's coordinating role in the sphere of new and innovative technologies. He welcomed the work done by the Commission on that basis for harmonizing United Nations activities in the field of new technologies, in particular information and communication technologies (ICT), and their practical application, for example in electronic commerce.

29. With the aim of strengthening the Commission's role, measures should be taken to ensure more active participation of United Nations system organizations in the Commission's activity. It would thus be useful to include in the documentation information on similar measures being taken by other institutions of the United Nations system. Cooperation should be developed between that Commission and the Commission on Sustainable Development on issues relating to the globalization of scientific and technical processes and the introduction of ecologically sound technologies. Communication between the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and the ICT Task Force was also important.

30. He generally agreed with the Administrative Committee on Coordination that the aims of development would increasingly be achieved by acquiring knowledge and education and not only by means of development in the material sphere. If United Nations agencies were to become "agencies of learning", a whole complex of general system-wide measures would be needed, and a corresponding adequate provision of resources.

31. In conclusion, he commended the efforts of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to create an information network on technology issues between the relevant departments of the United Nations. Such a network would enhance the effectiveness of the exchange of information, and would provide additional access to useful scientific and technological information for developing countries and those with economies in transition.

32. **Ms. Forde** (Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), endorsed the view of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development that science and technology were indispensable components of development activities and agreed with the Secretary-General that the

Commission should assist countries in formulating research and development policies.

33. Developments in pure science, computer science and information technology were driving the new economy and globalization, redefining the economic activity of nations and removing the impediments of remote geographic locations. Information and knowledge were becoming items of trade and, given the right tools, small nations could for the first time in history position themselves to leapfrog the development process. The United Nations system, in particular the Commission and UNCTAD should continue initiatives to strengthen their institutions with a view to helping developing nations rise to that challenge.

34. Advances in science and technology had created new possibilities for agriculture and medicine, but also presented new ethical considerations. Science and technology could help develop the knowledge necessary for early detection of and swift intervention for a wide range of diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, cancer and HIV/AIDS and she therefore welcomed the recent United Nations Health InterNetwork initiative for developing countries to provide on-line links in hospitals, clinics and public health facilities throughout the developing world.

35. However, scientific research should take into account cultural sensitivities and religious practices and ensure respect for national heritage and be conducted in strict adherence to international agreements and with the highest standards of efficacy. The United Nations system must continue to play its part in preventing the abuse of intellectual property rights by rights-holders and by those who resorted to practices that unreasonably restricted trade or adversely affected the transfer of technology.

36. In his report on the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century (A/54/2000) the Secretary-General had underscored the rapidity of technological change which had already served to exacerbate the digital divide between developed country technology providers and users from the significant portion of the developing world which was still lagging far behind. Effective participation in the new global environment required research capability and a technologically trained workforce and, for that reason, the Government of Barbados had adopted a new approach to education involving the use of information and multimedia technologies to enhance the range of learning experiences and prepare Barbados to take advantage of the new interdependent economy.

37. In July, the CARICOM heads of Government had designated the Caribbean Council for Science and Technology (CCST) as the agency responsible for coordinating and implementing its science and technology policies and programmes. The Commission was specifically mandated to give priority to regional issues involving science and technology, finalize regional science and technology policy and funding and staffing requirements and establish priorities and related directives for the region, based on decisions taken by CARICOM organs. It would also determine the needs of the region and promote cooperation, coordination and the rationalization of science and technology as well as organize national initiatives on science and technology options. The heads of Government had also recognized the need for greater liaison with the private sector in order to mobilize funding for science and technology initiatives.

38. The CARICOM heads of Government recognized the need to urgently strengthen the science and technology infrastructure in the Caribbean in order to increase production and productivity and generate wealth. They looked forward to receiving support from the Commission and UNCTAD in achieving their goals and establishing a strong and effective Caribbean Council on Science and Technology (CCST) which was essential to effectively harness and utilize the region's scarce scientific and technology resources; the CCST would welcome discussion on ways to collaborate with the Commission on Science and Technology for Development. Indeed, CARICOM and all developing nations required support in order to build on the efficiencies offered by new technology and science in order to create a foundation for economic and social development that would prepare all peoples everywhere to move forward. In that context, she welcomed the proposal made by the Japanese Government at the recent Group of Eight summit to give renewed support to science and technology, in particular information and communications technology.

39. The time had come for the United Nations and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development to play a more dynamic role in helping developing countries strengthen their capacity and increase support for science and technology, in particular information and communication technology,

for development. The Economic and Social Council had considered the role of information technology at its recent high-level segment and she looked forward to following up that issue, with a view to further promoting development and ensuring that advances in science and technology were treated as global resources for the benefit of all humanity.

40. **Mr. Moura** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), said that the advent of the information society had redefined many aspects of economic and social life at the national and international level, bringing changes in human relations and in the economic system. Information technologies now played an essential role in the promotion of development and well-being.

41. The information society must help to reduce the differences between rich and poor, not only at the international level, but also within each country.

42. The countries of the MERCOSUR region were taking an active role, at both the government and the private sector level, in the dissemination and application of new technologies that had a impact on economic and social life. They wanted not just to be passive participants — as recipients — in the transfer of technology but to participate in the information society by generating new technological achievements, and encouraging innovation. Cooperation activities and the definition of a joint regulatory framework for MERCOSUR would strengthen the scientific and technological capacity of the States parties.

43. That process had been continued by the recent Latin American and Caribbean Seminar held in Florianopolis, Brazil on Information Technology and Development. MERCOSUR, together with the final document of the meeting, known as the "Declaration of Florianopolis", emphasized the importance of: (a) expanding public programmes for access to information technology products and services; (b) creating mechanisms for training in the new technologies; (c) broadening the use of information technologies in public administration; (d) joint efforts with the private sector; and (e) encouraging the dissemination of regional, national and local cultural information on digital networks. Many of those issues had also been incorporated in the Ministerial Declaration made at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council. As the Florianopolis event had shown, the MERCOSUR countries and the region in general wished to see the United Nations taking an active role in that area.

44. Finally, he noted that at the recent session of the Economic and Social Council, the MERCOSUR countries had supported the setting up of a Task Force on information technologies, and noted that science and technology was a crucial instrument in the search for development in its broadest sense, and the item should therefore remain on the agenda.

45. **Mr. Tiwari** (India) referring to the Secretary-General's report (A/55/96-E/2000/84), said that, given the present focus on peace-keeping operations and the need for increased resources for those activities, it was important to recall that the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and UNCTAD had repeatedly expressed concerns over the lack of resources. He drew attention to paragraph 15 of the report which clearly stated that additional resources were needed to set up an electronic network and information exchange systems. All activities of the United Nations, particularly those relating to the development of developing countries, were woefully underfunded; he hoped that the General Assembly would take a positive decision on the request for additional resources.

46. Contemporary literature on the development of a knowledge-based society tended to portray the South as a technology-deficient zone, while ignoring the build-up of technological capacities in the South over the past two decades, and failing to recognize that the capacity to master and innovate technology now mattered more than its mere acquisition.

47. Science and technology must be imbued with a social consciousness, in order to ensure, for example, that biotechnology would help humanity to overcome hunger and malnutrition, without increasing the dependence of developing countries on the scientifically developed world. Progress in prenatal diagnosis should be used to prevent disease, rather than as a veiled form of eugenics. Those were not only ethical questions — science and technology had to be responsive to the needs of the vast majority of the populations — agriculturalists, marginal farmers, and unemployed youth. The bio-genetic revolution in the agricultural sphere would offer great opportunities for enhancing crop potential. India was one of the main centres of agricultural bio-diversity, and its wealth of genes could greatly complement current developments

in biotechnology and genetic engineering. As a predominantly agrarian country, India had decided to focus on important Indian crops such as rice and mustard, and had also established a national centre for plant genome research, hoping to ensure the country's self-reliance in agricultural produce.

48. If properly utilized, the developments in information and communication technologies would not only enhance the competitiveness of developing countries in the global marketplace, but also lead to the creation of a new society through cooperation at all levels in science and technology, in which the primordial organizational principle would be the quality of life. To be successful, information technology had to be pro-people and pro-development. India was developing its capacities in the field of information technology and simultaneously pursuing the objective of information technology for all by 2008.

49. Information technology was certainly no panacea for all developmental problems, but it could enhance productivity in small and medium-sized enterprises, which were the backbone of the economy of many developing countries. It could provide useful and productive employment for young people, and promote literacy, knowledge-sharing and social emancipation.

50. Appropriate low-cost technologies could promote local community-based development. While large-scale power plants were required, it was also necessary to continue to focus on mini-hydroelectric power generation, and solar and bio-mass energy. The allocation of funds for research and development would to be more than doubled within the next five years, but would still only be a small part of what was required. International support was crucial, not only in monetary terms, but also in promoting access to a broad spectrum of science and technology.

51. It was a matter of concern that access to technologies was sharply constrained by existing intellectual property and other unilateral regimes, whereas the traditional community-based knowledge of developing countries was scarcely acknowledged. All discussions of such issues should take into account the objectives of increasing social and economic welfare.

52. The protection of intellectual property, coupled with liberal trade and investment policies, was important for development. However, mercantilist use of intellectual property rights involving possible loss of health and damage to other socio-economic objectives should not be encouraged.

53. There was significant potential for broadening the scope of South-South cooperation. India would continue to put its strengths in frontier areas of information technology and electronics and other areas at the service of South-South cooperation, while expanding its cooperation with the developed nations, including tripartite cooperation for the benefit of other developing countries. India had entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with Germany in order to give a thrust to joint technology transfer to other developing countries, particularly the least developed countries.

54. The United Nations must strengthen its capacities to assist developing countries in their endeavours towards developing and utilizing science and technology, and for that reason his delegation supported the request of the Secretary-General for enhanced resource allocation to that area of the Organization's work.

55. **Mr. Popov** (Belarus) said that the processes of globalization, trade liberalization and industrial competition were making science and technology key factors for transformation of society and the world. The use of technology was becoming the determining factor in sustainable economic and social growth. The new international economic situation was having a significant impact on the scientific community in Belarus, and it was particularly important to select the priority areas for cooperation for development.

56. At the present stage, the Government was primarily supporting those innovations which promoted economic and social growth, inter alia by encouraging cooperation between different types of business structures and scientific workers in innovative projects which made use of advances in both basic and applied science.

57. Speaking of the importance of stable and predictable financing for those international programmes which could help to introduce progressive technologies in interested States, he called for a gradual strengthening and activation of cooperation of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and other agencies of the United Nations system in order to strengthen the scientific potential of the developing countries and countries with transition economies.

58. He welcomed the significant positive steps already taken by the Commission towards such cooperation, in particular, the activity in connection with the substantive theme for the work of the Commission during the inter-sessional period 1999-2001 "National capacity-building in biotechnology" and supported the corresponding recommendations worked out by the Commission.

59. Belarus had significant scientific and technical capacity and high-level scientific schools, and was ready to offer cooperation to international or other organizations for Belarusian scientists and experts to carry out scientific programmes and investment projects financed by the international community.

60. The new ICTs were an important factor in the new directions in the field of scientific work. In the previous year, a government policy had been approved which provided for the creation of an information society in Belarus, and the entry of the country into the global information space. Another government priority was cooperation with other States and international organizations for entry into the global information networks.

61. In that connection, it was appropriate and timely for the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to offer cooperation to developing States and States with economies in transition for national capacity-building in the field of information and telecommunications, which would promote the swift and effective integration of those countries into the world economy. That would seem a natural outcome of the political mandate contained in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and the Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the recent substantive session of the Economic and Social Council

62. Finally, his delegation fully shared the view that science and technology should be established as a cross-cutting theme within the work of the United Nations.

63. **Mr. Holubov** (Ukraine) said the global information revolution was redefining every sector. Information and communications technologies continued to advance, empowering individuals, communities and States, as well as various groups within societies. According to some forecasts, ICTs would soon become so inexpensive that most countries would be able to connect to the global information infrastructure.

64. Not all countries, however, had benefited equally in the transition to the information age, as the vast majority of ICT-related human activity was concentrated in the industrialised world. Concerns about the disparities between the industrialized and the developing world, especially with regard to Internet access, had engendered a worldwide debate about the global digital divide. In order to bridge that information and knowledge gap, the world community needed to maximize the benefits of ICTs and ensure that they were made available to all. The United Nations should take the lead in setting up a framework for ICT development cooperation.

65. A country's capacity to achieve sustained economic growth and to integrate into the world economy depended largely on the effectiveness of national policies and institutions. The development of national scientific, technological and technical capacities was a necessary precondition for increasing the competitiveness of developing countries as well as countries with economies in transition. Bridging the digital divide would remain one of the main challenges for Governments and the international community to address in the coming years.

66. His delegation appreciated the role of the United Nations system in strengthening international cooperation in the field of science and technology. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development had a leading role to play as a global forum for examination of science and technology issues, in the formulation of recommendations for the United Nations system, and in providing consultative assistance for Governments.

67. His delegation endorsed the proposals for strengthening the coordination of the mechanisms on the Commission on Science and Technology for Development contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/55/96-E/2000/84). The international community had an important supporting role to play, as industrialized nations and the international business community could accelerate the integration of those countries into the global economy by promoting an economic environment conducive to the development process. He therefore called on the international community to further enhance the cooperation in that important area.

68. **Mr. Urib** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the fourteen member States of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), agreed with the Secretary-General that United Nations agencies needed to become "agencies of learning". He noted the specific proposals and recommendations made at the various recent international meetings on science and technology, including the meeting in Budapest, Hungary, in the previous year, and the high-level segment of the recent subtractive session of the Economic and Social Council.

69. The current technological revolution was driven by the application of new scientific instruments and innovative methods acquired through research and development. The resulting volume of goods and services being transacted was astronomical, and the developing countries could not afford to miss out.

70. General Assembly resolution 54/201 recognized the significance for developing countries of access to science and technology. SADC had recently established a task force to formulate a strategy on the collection, organization and dissemination of scientific information in the region. The action taken would vary from country to country, depending on development priorities. SADC welcomed the willingness of advanced countries to work with the developing countries in that regard. The emerging global partnerships between the developed and developing countries would provide the enabling environment in which access to and transfer of technology to the developing countries could take place. In that connection the United Nations agencies should ensure that the transfer of technical know-how and skills became a reality in their operational activities.

71. Once ITCs were well integrated into the macroeconomic policy framework of developing countries, in addition to the systemic reform of the international financial architecture, the new digital revolution would enable the countries of the South to participate meaningfully in the global economy. In that context, the SADC Council of Ministers had directed the Community's Secretariat to consider expanding the concept of partners and partnerships beyond the traditional notion of donors, to include the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and other international institutions.

72. The developing countries, especially in Africa, must undertake innovative strategies which would facilitate fast-track sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

73. **Mr. Rim** Song Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that science and technology for development was a priority area, but there were a number of challenges to face, including the monopolizing of science and technology by the developed countries and the reluctance of those countries to transfer their science and technology or to meet their commitments for official development assistance.

74. Since many developing countries exported low-priced raw materials to developed countries and imported high-priced commodities from those countries, thereby increasing their own marginalization, it was important for the developing countries to devise their own plan for science and technology for economic development, and to create their own industry based on their own raw materials and resources. Active efforts should also be made to encourage South-South cooperation in that field.

75. The agencies of the United Nations system should play a key role in offering finance and technology to the developing countries to enable them to develop their own industry and to achieve sustainable development.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.